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AN EARNEST
EXHORTATION
TO THE
RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE
OF
GOOD-FRIDAY,
IN A
LETTER
TO THE
INHABITANTS OF LAMBETH PARISH.

By BEILBY PORTEUS, D.D.
RECTOR of the said PARISH.

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To V. 8-2

EXHIBIT A

RELIGIOUS OFFICERS



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AN EARNEST
EXHORTATION, &c.

My very good Friends and Parishioners,

THE little regard that has for some years
past been paid in several parts of this kingdom to that holy day, which we distinguish by the name of GOOD-FRIDAY, has given great concern to many serious Persons, and has more than once drawn severe animadversions on the Church of England and its governors in the public papers. But these censures (like most others which come through such channels) are very unjustly applied. The blame rests not on the Clergy. The Church requires a very solemn observance of the day; its Ministers set the example of doing *their* duty, but they are followed by much smaller numbers of their People than might naturally be expected. It is
A 2 true,

true, were the primitive discipline restored, which some have with no little vehemence demanded, it might possibly remedy this evil. But they who are most clamorous for the revival of that discipline, would perhaps be the first to complain of it, and to represent the remedy as worse than the disease. It is certain, at least, that these are not the times for any unusual exertions either of civil or ecclesiastical authority ; and it is only from private admonition, or public exhortations, that any reformation is in this instance to be expected. Sincerely desirous of contributing all in my power towards so good a work, I could not forbear addressing my self to you, my brethren, on this subject ; not because the neglect of Good-Friday is more observable here than elsewhere, but because it is with you I am more particularly concerned, and because I can truly say, that your welfare, both temporal and spiritual, is, and ever has been, since I first came amongst you, an object which I have had sincerely at heart. It is with pleasure I observe that my labours have not been wholly unsuccessful ; and that your own good dispositions, assisted by Divine Grace, have in many instances effectually seconded my weak endeavours for your service. Your attendance, particularly, on public worship, is, in general, exemplary, and your behaviour

Viour in it serious and devout. It were greatly to be wished that the same devout sense of religion, which seems to inspire you on the Lord's Day, was equally strong in you on Good-Friday. For although there is, I believe, full as much attention paid to that day in this Parish as in any other, yet there is in all, I fear, much less than there ought to be. If on that anniversary of our Lord's crucifixion, a stranger were to arrive in the capital or its neighbourhood, from a remote part of the world, he could not have the least imagination that it was set apart by authority as a day of public fasting, humiliation, and prayer ; and that it was originally distinguished by an event more astonishing in its nature, and more important in its consequences to the whole race of mankind, than any that had ever happened from the creation of the world to this moment ; an event which shook the whole frame of nature, which rent the rocks, caused the earth to quake, and the graves to open and give back their dead (a). Of all this he would scarce be able to discover any traces or memorials amongst us. He would see every kind of trade and traffic going on as usual ; the streets crowded with people, the roads

(a) Matth. xxvii. 51, 52.

lined with carriages and travellers, the fields full of labourers, and the same face of business and bustle, the same air of gaiety and dissipation as at any other time. Here and there indeed, he might perhaps perceive a few pious people resorting to church. He might also perchance discover a solitary shop or two, half open and half shut up, as if the owner was half Heathen and half Christian; as if he had some little misgivings of mind that he was doing wrong, and yet could not for his life summon up courage and religion enough to do what is right: so he goes stumbling on between both, *halting*, like the Jews before him, *between two opinions* (b), and trying hard to *serve two masters*, God and Mammon (c) at the same time.

To see the generality of people thus perfectly inattentive to the duties of that day, when the eternal Son of God hung agonizing on the cross for their sakes, must surely excite in every pious mind the most painful and melancholy reflections. To what cause shall we ascribe this strange insensibility, this want of all tender feeling and all grateful sentiment for the greatest and most substantial act of

(b) 1 Kings xviii. 21.

(c) Matth. vi. 24.

kindness

kindness that ever was conferred on any human being? It must be owing undoubtedly to one of these two causes; either to a total disbelief of the Christian revelation; or else merely to the want of attending properly to the inestimable advantages we derive from the sufferings and death of Christ.—With the first of these causes I have at present no concern. It is not to Infidels I am now addressing myself, but to Christians; under which denomination I am willing to believe that the whole of this Parish may be comprehended. You have not yet, I hope, profited so much by your vicinity to the metropolis, as to have imported all those wretched productions of modern philosophy, which in various shapes and sizes, under the name of essays, letters, novels, histories, from the bulky quarto down to the meager pamphlet, are every day scattering the spawn of irreligion on the other side of the Thames. You have not, I am persuaded, advanced near so far as this in the fashionable refinements of this polished age. Your principles are still uncorrupted; your faith in the Gospel is still firm and unshaken; but you have not perhaps sufficiently reflected on the nature and value of that Redemption, which Christ purchased for you on the cross; and consequently think but lightly of the day which is meant to commemorate

that unspeakable act of mercy. To correct this error therefore, and to inspire you with just notions of your duty in this respect, I shall, in as concise and as clear a manner as I can, explain to you the reason and the effect of those sufferings which our Redeemer was graciously pleased, on our account, to undergo upon the cross.

We all know and feel that we are weak, corrupt, and sinful creatures. We find in ourselves such a natural and innate propensity to what is wrong, and such a backwardness and indisposition, in many instances, to do what is right, that we cannot but conclude, (what Scripture assures us is true) that the human frame has undergone some great shock, and contracted some very fatal disorder, since it first came out of the hands of its wise and benevolent Author. We perceive ourselves incapable of pleasing a God of infinite purity and holiness, without some further help than nature can give us, and without greater indulgences than we have any title to expect. Every thinking man must be sensible, that after all his endeavours, and the very utmost he can do, he is still not only an unprofitable, but too often an ungrateful and disobedient servant. His passions frequently hurry him into the most heinous crimes,
and

and these sometimes grow into habits, which he finds it extremely difficult to subdue. Or if by some uncommon effort he does rescue himself from this slavery, yet how shall he wash away the stain that sin has left in his soul? how shall he appease the anger and regain the favour of his offended Maker? “By repenting,” you will perhaps say, “and amending his life.” This is undoubtedly the best thing he can do, and what every sinner is bound to do. But there is no reason to believe that repentance and reformation alone will be sufficient to avert the punishment due to past transgressions. Repenting is only being sorry for what has been done amiss. But that does not *undo* it; it does not put us in the same state as if we had never done it. Reformation of life is doing right for the future; but that can no more make amends for having acted wrong before, than forbearing to contract new debts can pay off the old. It is indeed probable that repentance and amendment will be accepted favourably by our Maker; but the sinner has no good ground, either from reason or experience, to think that they will be sufficient to obtain pardon, much less reward, without something else to assist and act in conjunction with them. He sees every day, that the bitterest sorrow, and the sincerest reformation, will not restore

store the credit, the fortune, the health, the strength, that his vices have destroyed ; and why then should he suppose that they will save him from punishment in the next world, when they cannot do it even in this ? The natural apprehensions of mankind are repugnant to such an idea. The Heathens themselves never imagined that repentance and reformation were an adequate atonement for sin. They made use of animal sacrifices to appease their offended gods ; an expedient of so singular and expensive a nature, that they would never have had recourse to it, had they not thought such an expiation absolutely necessary ; had they not been persuaded, that after all they could do themselves, something must be done or suffered by some other Being, before they could be restored to the condition they were in before they forfeited their innocence. What reason, then, can *we* have to think otherwise ? The goodness of God does indeed give us ground to hope that he will some way or other show mercy to his wretched creatures ; but his justice and his holiness give equal cause to think that he will assert his authority, and support his laws, by the punishment of those who transgress them. How then shall we reconcile these two seemingly inconsistent expectations ? What mode of treatment can we suppose it

possible for the Almighty to adopt towards the human race, which shall at once manifest his abhorrence of sin, and his tenderness for the sinner, shall release him from that heavy punishment which his disobedience merits, without exposing his own authority to contempt, or giving others encouragement to hope that they may insult his laws with impunity? Nothing less than infinite wisdom could strike out an expedient like this; and infinite wisdom did accordingly devise the following gracious method of giving salvation to mankind. At the properest time for such an interposition, God was pleased to send his own Son into the world, who took our nature upon him; and, after teaching a most pure and holy religion, of which his own life was a perfect example, he voluntarily submitted to a cruel and ignominious death upon the cross; which God was pleased to consider as an atonement and satisfaction made to his justice for the sins of all mankind, and to accept it in lieu of that punishment which they had justly incurred at his hands. Thus *did Mercy and Justice meet together, Righteousness and Peace did kiss each other (d)*. For the sake of that spotless sacrifice offered up for us by Christ our

(d) Psalm lxxxv. 10.

High-

High-priest, (to which the union of his divine nature with the human gave unspeakable value) God has promised to bestow on all who, in proportion to their means of knowledge, believe in his blessed Son, and repenting of their past faults, endeavour faithfully to obey him, pardon, grace, and everlasting life.

This is that most important doctrine of ATONEMENT, which is the basis of all our hopes, the chief corner-stone of the whole Christian system, the great leading principle which runs through all the sacred writings, and animates and ennobles almost every part of our Liturgy(*). If you ask
what

(*) Especially *The Communion Office*, which is entirely founded on this doctrine as here explained; and the following prayer more particularly expresses it in so fine a strain of true Christian piety, that I could not forbear transcribing and recommending it to the reader's notice, as comprehending in a short compass the sense both of Scripture and of our Church on this great article of our Faith.

“ O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant that by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his Passion. And here we offer and present unto thee, O
“ Lord,

what authority there is for ascribing so much efficacy to the death of Christ; I answer, the very highest, — the plain, express, and positive declarations of Holy Writ, such as it is impossible, without violating all the common rules of interpretation, to wrest to any other meaning. *Search the Scriptures*, yourselves, I beseech you, and see whether these things are not so. See whether they do not tell you that *Christ was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities*; that *the chastisements of our peace were upon him*, and that *by his stripes we are healed* (e). That *the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all* (f). That *for our transgressions he was stricken* (g), and *his soul made an offering for*

“ Lord, ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable,
 “ holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee
 “ that all we who are partakers of this holy communion, may
 “ be fulfilled with thy grace and heavenly Benediction. And
 “ although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer
 “ unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our
 “ bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom,
 “ and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour
 “ and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without
 “ end.” [Collect after receiving.]

(e) Isaiah liii. 5.

(f) Isaiah liii. 6.

(g) Isaiah liii. 8.

fin.

sin (b). This is the language of the prophets many hundred years before our Saviour came into the world; which shows that his death was neither accidental, nor merely the natural consequence of his boldness in reproofing the reigning vices of the age, but was *predetermined* long before, and was *intended* to be a propitiatory sacrifice, a vicarious punishment for the sins of all mankind. In perfect consonance with this idea, the sacred writers of the New Testament tell us, that *the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many (i)*. That *he is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (k)*. That *God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood (l)*. *Christ hath loved us, says St. Paul, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God (m)*. *Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (n)*. *He was once offered to bear the sins of many (o)*. *He hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God (p)*. *He gave himself a ransom for all (q), that he might redeem us from all iniquity (r)*. And the whole New Testament declares,

(b) Isaiah liii. 10.

(k) John i. 29.

(m) Ephes. v. 2.

(o) Heb. ix. 28.

(q) 1 Tim. ii. 6.

(i) Matth. xx. 28.

(l) Romans iii. 25.

(n) Heb. ix. 26.

(p) 1 Pet. iii. 18.

(r) Titus ii. 14.

that

that we are *redeemed by him, purchased and bought with the price of his blood* (s).

These, my brethren, are the words of Scripture; and if words have any meaning at all, these can mean nothing else, than that Christ came into the world *on purpose* to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, and that He made there a “full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world (t).” This I am sure is the sense, in which every plain man must understand the passages above quoted: and if this sense can by any ingenious device of criticism, be conveyed away, and a totally different one slipped into its place; it would, I apprehend, be no difficult matter by the very same dexterity of interpretation to explain away the truth of every doctrine, and the obligation of every precept that is to be found in the Gospel.

If such then are the benefits we derive from the death of our blessed Lord; if in his blood our guilt is washed away; if through his merits, not our own, (on the conditions of repentance, faith, and amend-

(s) Acts xx. 28. 1 Cor. vi. 20. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. 2 Pet. ii. 1. Rev. v. 9.

(t) Prayer of consecration in the Communion Office.

ment)

ment) we obtain the remission of our sins and the inheritance of everlasting life ; consider, I beseech you, what kind of return such invaluable mercies demand ; consider whether that very day, on which these mercies were conveyed to you, ought in reason, in justice, in gratitude, in common decency, to be treated in the manner it too commonly is. *I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say* (u), and determine for yourselves. *Greater love, you must allow, hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (x). Suppose then for a moment, that some friend of your own had actually done this for you ; that, when your life was forfeited by some crime against the state, he had voluntarily substituted himself in your place, and suffered the punishment incurred by your offence : what would be your feelings, what would be your behaviour on this occasion ? Would you suffer the annual return of that day on which your friend died for you, to pass unheeded, undistinguished, unhallowed by a single tear or sigh, by a single reflection on that most transcendent act of kindness, to which you owed your very existence ? There is not a man amongst you that would not think himself injured and insulted

(u) 1 Cor. x. 15.

(x) John xv. 13.

by such a suspicion. Yet this supposed act of kindness (great as it undoubtedly is) falls far below what you have actually experienced from the love of your Redeemer. It was not when you were his *friends*, but when you were his *enemies* (y), that he sacrificed his life for you. *For God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us* (z). We believe, or profess to believe, that this is true; and yet what is our behaviour in consequence of it? Why on the anniversary of the day when it is supposed to have happened, too many of us, alas! are as easy and unconcerned, as much devoted to business or to pleasure, as if nothing in the world had happened with which we had the least concern? Is this right, is this fitting; is it Christian like, is it decent, is it creditable? Does it show that veneration, love, and gratitude, which malefactors reprieved from death are wont to testify towards their benefactor and deliverer?

“How then,” you will perhaps say, “would you have us observe this day?” In the manner certainly prescribed by the Church; and in which it used an-

(y) Romans v. 10.

(z) Romans v. 8.

tiently to be observed ; with as much seriousness, solemnity, and devotion ; with as absolute a cessation of all worldly business and pleasure, as usually takes place on Sunday. In this manner you celebrate Christmas-day, and why then not Good-Friday ? On the former of these your Redeemer was born, on the latter He was put to death ; and is his Crucifixion, do you think, of less consequence to you than his Nativity ? Is it not, on the contrary, to the former of these events that the latter owes the greater part of its value ? That he *who thought it not robbery to be equal with God (a), who was the very brightness of his Glory, and the express image of his Person (b),* should voluntarily divest himself of this splendour, and take upon him, not only the nature of man, but the form of a servant, was, it must be owned, a most surprising instance of condescension and kindness ; but that he should moreover, for our sakes, submit to the cruellest injuries and indignities, to the most ignominious and excruciating death ; that he should consent *to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows (*)*, is surely a still stronger and more extraordinary proof of his love and affection for mankind, and therefore certainly demands at

(a) Phil. ii. 6.

(b) Heb. i. 3.

(*) Is. iii. 4.

least an equal degree of veneration and thankfulness.

There is indeed one difference between the two days in question, which may in some measure possibly account for the different regard which is shown to them. The Nativity of our Lord is a festival, the Crucifixion is a fast, and we find ourselves perhaps much better disposed to rejoice than to weep, to indulge our appetites, than to restrain them. If this be really the case with any of us : if we are capable of being withheld from our duty by such low, such mean, such sensual motives as these, it is, I am sure, high time to extricate ourselves from this unworthy thralldom, to break loose from the dominion of sense, *to keep our body under, and bring it into subjection* (*), and put ourselves under the direction of higher and better principles.

Could ye not watch with me one hour (c) ? said our Saviour to his drowsy disciples : “ Can ye not fast “ for me one day in the year ? ” may he now say to you. It is true, indeed, mere abstinence from food, whether total or partial, is in itself no virtue, nor can it atone for the breach of any moral

(*) 1 Cor. ix. 27.

(c) Matt. xxvi. 40.

duty ; and to suppose that it can, is a dangerous and delusive superstition. But, on the other hand, to neglect it absolutely, and deride it as a useless and ridiculous custom, is presumptuous and rash (*d*). Fasting is a very proper mark of internal sorrow and contrition. It is only making use of a more emphatical kind of language to speak our sentiments ; it is expressing them by actions instead of words. By inflicting this voluntary punishment on ourselves, we plainly acknowledge that we are offenders, and that we take shame and grief to ourselves for the faults we have committed. The mortification of one of our strongest appetites is a very significant way of saying, that we resolve to repent, and to subdue *those lusts which war against the soul* (*e*). For this conflict we shall be better prepared by such previous exercises of our strength ; and a superiority established over our desires in one instance, facilitates it in all the rest. Add to this, that the more we abstain from sensual indulgences, the better are we disposed for spiritual meditations. The

(*d*) See the nature, uses, and abuses of religious abstinence, stated and explained by Archbishop Secker, with that accuracy, judgment, moderation, and good sense, which so strongly mark the writings of that incomparable Prelate.

Secker's Sermons, Vol. 5. S. 14. P. 305.

(*e*) 1 Pet. ii. 11.

body

body when overloaded with luxurious food *presseth down the soul, and weigheth down the mind that museth on many things* (f).—For these reasons, fasting has, in almost all ages and nations of the world, been considered as a very proper act of religious discipline. Amongst the Jews it was very common, and on several solemn occasions was required by their law. But being at length abused, like many other externals of their religion, to the purposes of hypocrisy and superstition, our Saviour severely reprov'd their ostentatious austerities; and, lest his disciples should be led to imitate them, did not give them any direct command to fast. Yet to those who voluntarily adopted this custom from good intentions, he prescribed rules for conducting themselves properly, and promised them a reward (g). He himself fasted forty days and forty nights. These things plainly show that he approved the practice, and that it was the abuses of it only which he condemned. The Church of England does so likewise, and observes the same prudent moderation in this as in many other instances. It neither gives encouragement to idleness and dissipation, by too great a number of Festivals, nor oppresses its members by a load of

(f) Wisdom ix. 15.

(g) Matth. vi. 16, 18.

needless and superstitious austerities. It recommends with great propriety some degree of self-denial during the season of Lent; and were that injunction better complied with than it seems to be, it would be found, I believe, highly conducive both to health of body and tranquillity of mind. But it leaves the observance of it to every man's own discretion, and inflicts no penalty for neglecting it. The Fast on which the primitive Church seems to have laid the greatest stress, and which till of late years has been usually observed with great seriousness, is that of GOOD-FRIDAY. And surely, if ever any restraint on our appetites and pleasures can be proper, if ever it can be a reasonable duty to "turn to the Lord with weeping, fasting, and praying" (*b*), and to bewail our sins with every inward sentiment and every outward expression of the deepest humiliation and contrition, it must be on that day, when, to deliver us from the power and the punishment of those sins, Christ Jesus offered himself up as a sacrifice on the cross; when *he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again* (*i*). It would cer-

(*b*) Commination.

(*i*) 2 Cor. v. 15.

tainly be decent, and probably useful too, to make some little sacrifice of our common indulgences on Good-Friday to him, who then made so great a one for us. They who cannot wholly omit their usual refreshments, may at least delay them a little, or partake of them more sparingly. This, one would think, must be consistent with the tenderest constitution and most delicate health. But if it should in any case be found otherwise, *God will have mercy and not sacrifice (k)*. Judge for yourselves in this particular ; judge fairly in your own case, and charitably in that of others. *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not ; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth (l)*. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (m)*. Fasting was intended to disengage the mind from sensual objects, to weaken the passions, to spiritualize the affections, to exalt and enliven devotion. If it does not answer these purposes ; if, on the contrary, it be found to render us languid and faint, peevish and morose ; if it blunts the edge and deadens the spirit of our religious exercises ; it is no longer a duty to practise it ; it becomes a duty to omit it.

(k) Matth. ix. 13.

(l) Rom. xiv. 3.

(m) Rom. xiv. 17.

But they who are incapable of complying with the injunctions of the Church in this respect, are certainly able, and ought to be doubly careful, to conform to them in all others. If men cannot fast, they can pray; if they cannot abstain from their ordinary food, they can abstain at least from their ordinary labours, cares, and amusements; they can put this world and its concerns out of their minds, and give themselves up to God; they can attend divine service both parts of the day; they can dedicate the remainder of it to private meditation and prayer; they can examine into their past and present conduct; they can possess themselves with a just sense of their own natural weakness and depravity; of the infinite need they have of a mediator, a redeemer, a propitiation for their sins; they can adore the goodness of God in providing, the goodness of Christ in consenting to become, the very Sacrifice they so much wanted, the *Lamb slain* to expiate their guilt, to restore them to the favour of God, and render their best services acceptable in his sight.—For let them, let all the world know and acknowledge, with the deepest humility and gratitude; that *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy God saved us* (n); and that

(n) Titus iii. 5.

it is by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God (o).

It is indeed principally for the sake of imprinting this most important truth strongly and powerfully upon your souls, so as to render it a constant and effectual principle of action, that I so much press upon you a due attention to the day which is particularly calculated to bring it home to your thoughts. Were it even, as some contend, nothing more than a mere speculative doctrine; yet as it is, without dispute, the great distinguishing character of the Christian dispensation, the wall of partition between natural and revealed religion, the main foundation of all our hopes of pardon and acceptance hereafter, it would surely demand a most serious regard from us (p). But in fact it is far from being a matter of belief only; it has a direct and natural tendency to influence our practice; and they who reject it, or explain it away to nothing, do not seem to be aware that they are destroying one of the most efficacious

(o) Ephes. ii. 8.

(p) This is the doctrine (says the excellent Bishop Sherlock) which, together with the principles on which it is founded, and the consequences naturally flowing from it, distinguishes the Christian religion from all other religions whatever.

Sermons, Vol. iv. D. 3. p. 88.

motives

motives to right conduct. For what can more clearly prove to us the odious nature of sin, and inspire us with a greater horror and detestation of it, than the consideration, that nothing less than the blood of the Son of God himself could wash away the stains of it; and that, without this, not even the sincerest repentance and completest reformation that we are capable of, would be a sufficient satisfaction to the violated laws and offended majesty of heaven? What an awful idea does this give us both of the severity and the goodness of God! of that severity to guilt, which becomes the righteous Governour of the universe; of that goodness to the criminal, which so well suits and so plainly speaks the gracious Father of mankind! What infinite cause have we to be careful of offending so kind, yet so exact a Judge, “and to tremble at his justice, “even whilst we are within the arms of his mercy!” What encouragement does it afford us to put out all our strength, and strain every nerve in the performance of our duty, when we know, that, though after all *we are unprofitable servants* (q); yet, unprofitable as we are, we shall be accepted for the sake of our Redeemer’s sufferings! that our want of merit will be amply supplied by his merit; and

(q) Luke xvii. 10.

our numberless failings and imperfections lost in the plenitude of his all-sufficient righteousness! How powerfully, in fine, must it constrain us to every instance of duty and affection, both to our Maker and our Redeemer, when we call to mind those wonderful marks of love displayed towards us by both in the great work of our salvation! Perhaps we cannot see all the reasons that made it necessary for Christ to die, that the world might live; but this at least we are sure of, that if Christ did really die, that the world might live, we are bound to him in the strictest bonds of gratitude and affection (r). That the eternal Son of God should put himself in our stead, and interpose his own body as a living shield between our guilt and his Father's wrath, is such a stupendous instance of friendship, as is not to be paralleled in the history of mankind. — *Lord! what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him (s)!* “ And what is the natural effect
 “ of such kindness as this, but to bind us to God
 “ and our Saviour by the tie of reciprocal affection,
 “ and draw us to our duty by the cords of tenderness and gratitude? Surely, if we are not utterly
 “ lost to all that is modest and ingenuous, tender

(r) Sherlock.

(s) Psalm viii. 4.

“ and apprehensive in human nature, it will be
 “ impossible for us to doat on those sins which
 “ were the cause of our Saviour’s sufferings, the
 “ thorns that gored his temples, the nails that
 “ pierced his hands and feet; it will be impossible
 “ for us to resist those endearing instances of our
 “ Saviour’s love, which carry warmth and fervour
 “ enough with them to melt the most obdurate
 “ nature into thankfulness and obedience (t).”

You see then, my brethren, how many weighty
 reasons there are for a religious observance of Good-
 Friday. It is a decent compliance with the ordi-
 nances of the Church; it is an open declaration,
 that you believe that most essential article of Chris-
 tian Faith, THE REDEMPTION OF MANKIND BY
 THE DEATH OF CHRIST JESUS ON THE CROSS;
 it is a becoming mark of thankfulness and grati-
 tude for so invaluable a mercy; it affords a very
 proper opportunity of reviewing your past life; of
 confessing and lamenting the many sins and fol-
 lies you perceive in it with the utmost sorrow and
 humiliation of soul; of intreating pardon through the
 merits of your Redeemer; and of pleading those merits
 before God in the Holy Sacrament of the Lord’s

(t) Scott’s Christian Life, ch. 7. sect. 5. p. 137.

Supper ; which being intended to commemorate the sufferings of Christ, can never be more properly received than on the very day when those sufferings are supposed to have happened. A devout use of the Prayers, which you will find in the office for that solemnity, cannot fail to impress upon your souls a deep sense of the goodness both of God and of Christ in the great work of your Redemption, a sincere contrition for your past offences, and a firm resolution to be more careful of your future conduct.

It is on these grounds, it is from a real persuasion that the Cross of Christ is the *Power of God unto Salvation*, and that far from being ashamed of it, you ought to glory in it, as the grand source of all your comfort here and all your happiness hereafter ; it is, I say, from motives such as these, that I have been induced to address you on this occasion. Hitherto, I am willing to persuade myself, my exhortations have had some weight with you. Let them not lose it, I intreat you, in the present instance. Let me have the satisfaction of observing the good effects of them at the approaching holy season, and of seeing you the first amongst your neighbours to revive the ancient religious veneration paid to the
Crucifixion

Crucifixion of our blessed Lord (*u*). Let your church be crowded on that day, both in the morning and the afternoon. Let your shops be shut up as on Sundays and on Christmas day. Let your behaviour during the rest of the day be serious and devout. Above all things, take care to show your gratitude for your redemption, not only with your lips, but in your lives. In particular, let the mercies you have received from your Maker and your Redeemer incline you to every act of mercy, forgiveness, and forbearance towards your fellow-creatures. This argument is stated by St. John, with his usual elegant brevity and simplicity: *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another* (*x*).—An inference so plain, so forcible, so affecting, it is impossible for any ingenuous mind to resist. *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering* (*y*). *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away*

(*u*) Mr. Nelson tells us, that in the year 1710 Good-Friday was required by authority to be kept as a day of devotion, and sequestered from all worldly business; and that it was accordingly religiously observed throughout the whole city of London, by shutting up of shops, and attending the public assemblies.

Companion to Festivals and Fasts, &c. p. 484.

(*x*) 1 John iv. 11.

(*y*) Col. iii. 12.

from

from you, with all malice ; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (z).

That by this heavenly temper, and the practice of every other Christian virtue, you may render yourselves worthy to obtain, through faith in your Redeemer, the gift of everlasting life, is the fervent prayer of

Your very sincere friend,
and faithful servant,

B. PORTEUS.

(z) Ephes. iv. 31.

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